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(54) **METHOD OF JOINING GRAPHITE FIBERS TO A SUBSTRATE**

(75) Inventors: **Durwood M. Beringer**, Suffield, CT (US); **Mark E. Caron**, Somers, CT (US); **Edmund P. Taddey**, West Springfield, MA (US); **Brian P. Gleason**, South Windsor, CT (US)

(73) Assignee: **Hamilton Sundstrand Space Systems International, Inc.**, Windsor Locks, CT (US)

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**B23K 1/20** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**  
USPC ..... **228/124.1**; 228/122.1; 428/634

(58) **Field of Classification Search**  
CPC ..... B23K 1/0012  
USPC ..... 228/124.1, 122.1; 428/634  
See application file for complete search history.

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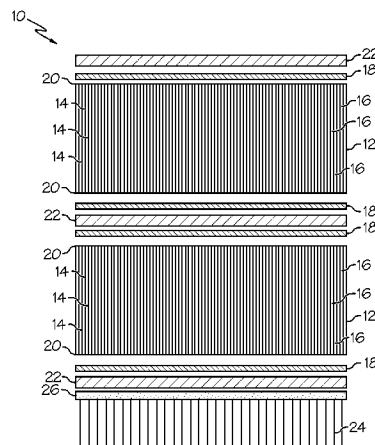
*Primary Examiner* — Nicholas P D'Aniello

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Cantor Colburn LLP

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A method of assembling a metallic-graphite structure includes forming a wetted graphite subassembly by arranging one or more layers of graphite fiber material including a plurality of graphite fibers and applying a layer of metallization material to ends of the plurality of graphite fibers. At least one metallic substrate is secured to the wetted graphite subassembly via the layer of metallization material.

**9 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets**



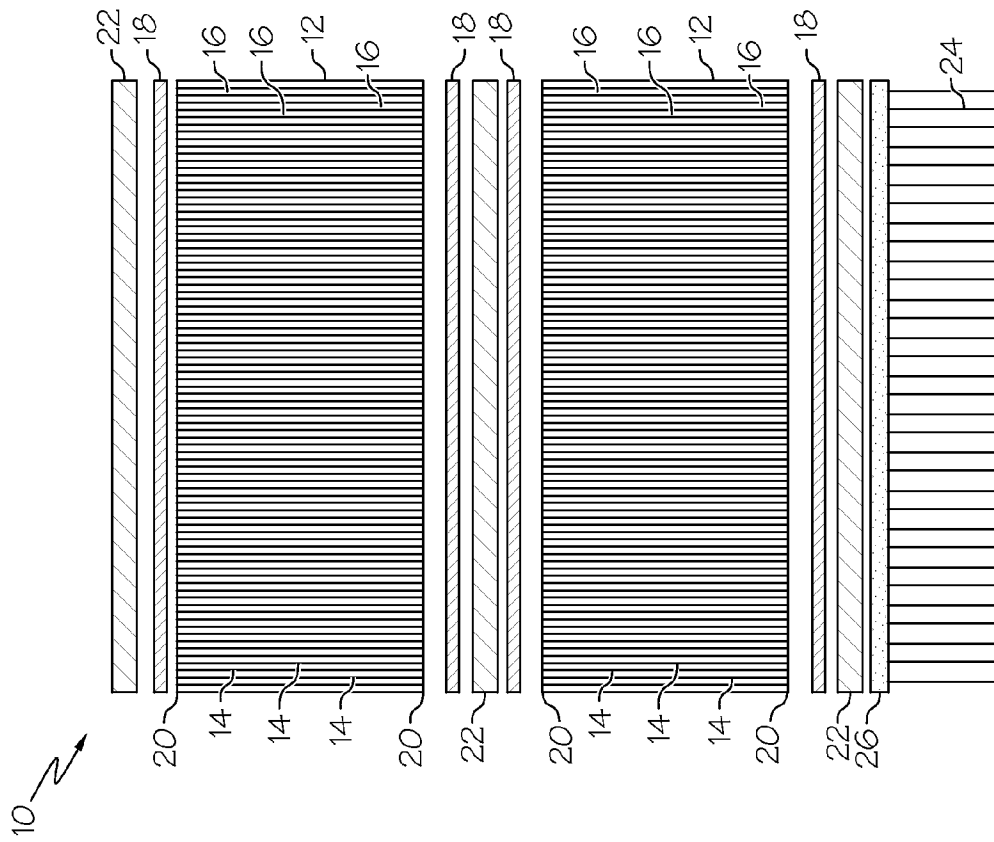


FIG. 1

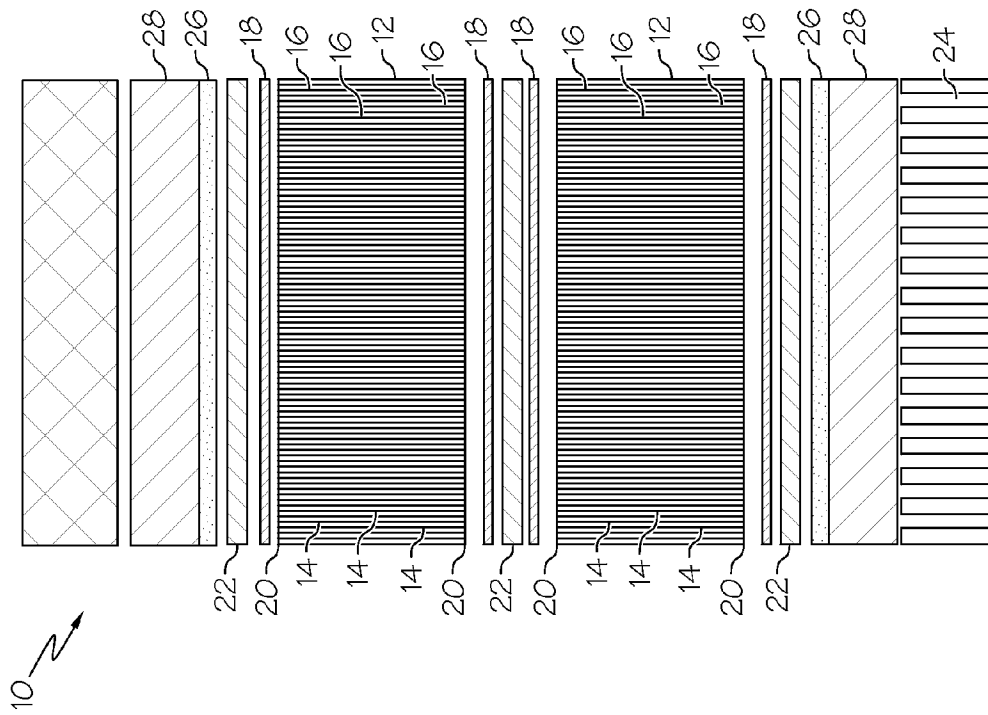


FIG. 2

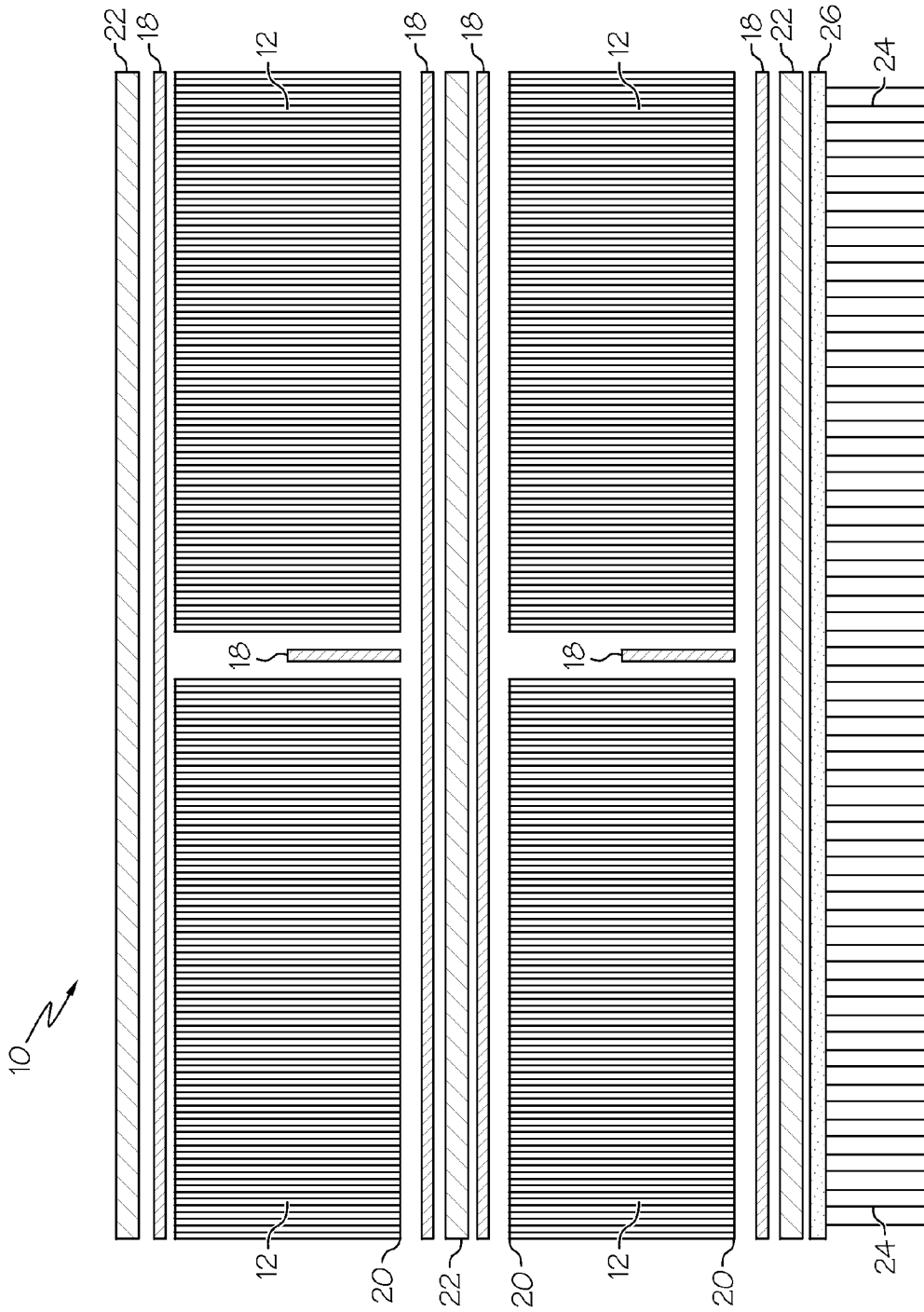


FIG. 3

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## METHOD OF JOINING GRAPHITE FIBERS TO A SUBSTRATE

### CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This patent application is a continuation-in-part and claims priority to U.S. Nonprovisional patent application Ser. No. 12/623,705 filed Nov. 23, 2009, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

### FEDERAL RESEARCH STATEMENT

This invention was made with Government support under United States Government contract DO #3-DO-CRAVE-EC-003R8 awarded by NASA. The Government has certain rights in the invention.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The subject matter disclosed herein generally relates to graphite fibers joined to a substrate material. More particularly, the subject matter disclosed herein relates to graphite fiber and substrate structures for heat exchanger systems.

Graphite fiber material, for example, Fibercore®, is often utilized in heat exchange applications. The material comprises an array of graphite fibers having voids between adjacent fibers. In such applications, voids in the material may be filled with a heat storage, or phase change, material such as wax, water or the like. In some applications, no heat storage material is added. Large pieces of the graphite fiber material are typically bonded to a desired surface, for example, an aluminum component, via an adhesive. Thermal mismatch issues are common between bulk graphite and graphite foam when joined to a metallic substrate. For example, graphite materials typically have a coefficient of thermal expansion in the range of about 0-2  $\mu\text{in}/\text{in}/^\circ\text{F}$ ., while for metals this coefficient is in the range of about 5-12  $\mu\text{in}/\text{in}/^\circ\text{F}$ . and for polymers the coefficient is in the range of about 10-70  $\mu\text{in}/\text{in}/^\circ\text{F}$ . The graphite fiber material is not a monolithic structure and as such accommodates the thermal mismatch by translating with the substrate during thermal processing. Further, the thickness of the graphite fiber material layer, which is relative to a length of the graphite fibers in the material, is limited due to capability of graphite fiber production. The relatively thin graphite fiber material is fragile and is subject to breakage and damage when handling and/or shaping by machining or the like into desired shapes. The art would well receive a more robust structure of graphite fiber material, which is not as sensitive to handling and/or other processing and which improves the thermal mismatch issues that exist in current structures. Also, in this process, a multilayered graphite fiber material structure may be obtained.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

According to one aspect of the invention, a method of assembling a metallic-graphite structure includes forming a wetted graphite subassembly by arranging one or more layers of graphite fiber material including a plurality of graphite fibers and applying a layer of metallization material to ends of the plurality of graphite fibers. At least one metallic substrate is secured to the wetted graphite subassembly via the layer of metallization material.

These and other advantages and features will become more apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the drawings.

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## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The subject matter, which is regarded as the invention, is particularly pointed out and distinctly claimed in the claims at the conclusion of the specification. The foregoing and other features, and advantages of the invention are apparent from the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of an embodiment of a graphite fiber heat dissipative structure;

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of another embodiment of a graphite fiber heat dissipative structure; and

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of yet another embodiment of a graphite fiber heat dissipative structure.

The detailed description explains embodiments of the invention, together with advantages and features, by way of example with reference to the drawings.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Shown in FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of an embodiment of a multi-layer graphite fiber material structure 10. The embodiment of FIG. 1 includes two graphite fiber material layers 12, but it is to be appreciated that other quantities of graphite fiber material layers 12, for example, one, three, five or more graphite fiber material layers 12 may be utilized in the structure 10. Each graphite fiber material layer 12 includes a plurality of graphite fibers 14, with a plurality of voids between the graphite fibers 14. In one embodiment, the graphite fibers 14 are approximately 0.40 inches (1.0 cm) long, which results in a graphite fiber material layer 12 thickness of 0.40 inches (1.0 cm). It is to be appreciated, though, that other lengths of graphite fibers 14, resulting in other thicknesses of graphite fiber material layers 12, may be utilized. In embodiments where longer graphite fibers 14 are utilized, the fibers may be arranged with a greater density to resist buckling of the graphite fibers 14.

A layer of braze filler 18, for example a nickel braze alloy filler, is utilized between the graphite fiber material layers 12 to join the graphite fiber material layers 12. In this embodiment, a length of the graphic fibers 14 of the graphite fiber material layer 12 extends substantially from one layer of filler 18 to another layer of filler 18. In some embodiments, at each upper and lower end 20 of the assembly, a metallic sheet 22, which may be a nickel or other suitable material, is brazed to the filler 18. Additionally, in some embodiments, a metallic sheet 22 may be disposed between graphite layers 12 in the assembly. In embodiments where more than one graphite fiber material layer 12 is utilized, brazing of all graphite fiber material layers 12 together may be accomplished in a single step. While the embodiments illustrated utilize a nickel metallic sheet 22 and a nickel braze alloy filler 18, in some embodiments, the metallic sheet 22 may be other nickel-based brazing alloys or of an alloy of titanium and titanium-containing fillers 18 may be utilized therewith. Further, while the filler 18 is shown as a sheet or foil, it is to be appreciated that the filler may be applied in other forms, such as a paste or spray or the like.

The sandwich structure is brazed to a substrate 24 formed from, for example, an aluminum material. Alternatively, the substrate 24 may be formed from other materials, such as stainless steel or nickel alloy where increased fluid compatibility is required, for example in a corrosive fluids environment. Brazing of the metallic sheet 22 to the substrate 24 is accomplished via an aluminum braze alloy 26 or other filler compatible with the substrate (e.g. nickel braze filler for

stainless steel) and environment disposed between the metallic sheet **22** and the substrate **24**.

In some embodiments, as shown in FIG. 2, an endsheet **28** is located between the metallic sheet **22** and the substrate **24**. The endsheet **28** is formed of, for example, aluminum multi-  
5 clad, and is brazed to the metallic sheet **22** and the substrate **24** using aluminum braze alloy **26**. Further, in some embodiments, an additional aluminum braze alloy layer **26** is utilized between substrate **24** and end sheet **28**. While substrate **24** is shown as a plurality of fins, it is to be appreciated that the substrate **24** represents a generic heat transfer device, which may include, for example, fins, a radiator structure, milled or drilled channels, or a radiant surface, or the like. In some  
10 embodiments, once the structure is joined as described above a phase heat storage material **16**, such as wax or water is infiltrated into the voids between the graphite fibers **14**.

While the joining process as described above may be performed in a single step, in other embodiments, the process is performed in two or more steps. For example, referring again to FIG. 2, a subassembly is formed of the graphite fiber  
20 material layers **12**, the filler **18**, and the metallic sheet **22**. The filler **18** is applied to ends of the graphite fibers **14** to metallize or wet the graphite fibers **14**, which allows for bonding of the graphite fibers **14** to the metallic sheet **22**. When the subassembly is completed, it may be set aside, handled, or stored with the metallic sheet **22** acting as a protective layer over the graphite fibers **14**. In the second step, the metallized subassembly is joined to the aluminum end sheet **28** via, for example, a vacuum brazing process.

In some embodiments, as shown in FIG. 3, two or more  
30 graphite fiber material layers **12** may be arranged side-to-side and joined via brazing. In these embodiments, the metallic sheet **22** is omitted between side-to-side adjacent graphite fiber material layers **12**, and only filler **18** is located between sides **30** of adjacent graphite fiber material layers **12**. To accomplish the brazing operation, the filler **18** is located  
35 between the metallic sheet **22** and each graphite fiber material layers **12**, wetting the graphite fibers **14**. When joining graphite fiber material layers **12** side-to-side, the filler **18** extends only partially along the length of the graphite fibers **14**. Leaving a portion of the joint uncovered by filler **18** allows for more efficient filling of the gaps between graphite fibers **14** with heat storage material **16** in later processing after the graphite fiber material layers **12** are joined. Location of filler  
40 **18** may be alternated throughout an assembly to promote flow of the heat storage material **16** through the graphite fiber material layer **12** when filled. As shown in FIG. 3, multiple layers may be constructed once the graphite fiber material layers **12** are joined side-to-side. The stack may include a metallic sheet **22** at the top and/or bottom of the assembly, and optionally a metallic sheet **22** may be disposed between  
45 graphite fiber material layers **12**. In effect, a large brazed assembly of graphite fiber material layers **12**, extending both in thickness and in length/width may be constructed.

The joining of ends of graphite fibers **14** to a metallic sheet **22** into the sandwich structure results in an effectively longer  
50 graphite fiber **14** length. The taller graphite fiber material

height may be packaged into a more cubic structure (vs. a flat plate) which requires less external support during vibrational loading. Further, the metallic sheet **22**/graphite fiber material layer **12** structure is less susceptible to handling damage and can be shaped by a variety of processes, for example, electrical discharge machining (EDM), to produce desired shapes to close tolerances.

While the invention has been described in detail in connection with only a limited number of embodiments, it should be readily understood that the invention is not limited to such disclosed embodiments. Rather, the invention can be modified to incorporate any number of variations, alterations, substitutions or equivalent arrangements not heretofore described, but which are commensurate with the spirit and scope of the invention. Additionally, while various embodiments of the invention have been described, it is to be understood that aspects of the invention may include only some of the described embodiments. Accordingly, the invention is not to be seen as limited by the foregoing description, but is only limited by the scope of the appended claims.

The invention claimed is:

**1.** A method of assembling a metallic-graphite structure comprising:

forming a wetted graphite subassembly by:

arranging one or more layers of graphite fiber material including a plurality of graphite fibers; and  
applying a layer of metallization material to ends of the plurality of graphite fibers; and

securing at least one metallic substrate to the wetted graphite subassembly via the layer of metallization material; and

filling voids between the adjacent graphite fibers of the plurality of graphite fibers with a heat storage material after securing the at least one metallic substrate to the wetted graphite subassembly;

wherein the heat storage material is one of wax or water.

**2.** The method of claim **1**, wherein the metallization material includes at least one metallic sheet.

**3.** The method of claim **1**, wherein the metallization material is a nickel or titanium containing material.

**4.** The method of claim **1**, wherein the metallic substrate is formed from aluminum or an aluminum-containing alloy.

**5.** The method of claim **1**, wherein the metallic substrate is secured to the wetted graphite subassembly via brazing.

**6.** The method of claim **1**, further comprising arranging two or more layers of graphite fiber material to increase an effective length of the plurality of graphite fibers.

**7.** The method of claim **6**, wherein at least one metallic sheet is disposed between adjacent layers of the two or more layers of graphite fiber material.

**8.** The method of claim **1**, further comprising arranging two or more layers of graphite fiber material side-by-side with a layer of metallization material disposed therebetween.

**9.** The method of claim **1**, wherein the metallic substrate is a heat transfer device.

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